

Elisabeth
HIS
DREAM CHILD

By

A. ELISABETH UPTON KIRK

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Dedicated to
Fathers
Yours and Mine

No character in this book is the picture of any actual person.

I have cut out all description of trees and flowers, and made this truth as concise as possible, realizing that this is a world of busy men and women.

The Author.

*“The seed, not the soil, shapes the house
to hold one of God’s Perfect Souls.*

A

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A Soliloquy

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ His Only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." And since Christ was and Yea, even so to Abraham, God gave this warning:

*"The seed not the soil shapes the house to hold
One of God's Perfect Souls."*

So when Christ came on the earth, the Mother was easily found, but the Father, must be the Perfect One, so God sent the Holy Ghost.

The clock was on the stroke of ten as an old man slowly turned his eyes from the window where the curtains were lazily moving back and forth by the soft breeze as

this day in early April was like any April day may be, when the sun shines down with all the warmth of a day in June. He likened the day to his wife the Lady Elisabeth Poindexter who had lived only one short year after her marriage to the then young, handsome Daredevil Dick Mangrove, as his friends liked to call him, who was the sixteenth Earl of Cavincrain, heir to all the land and town of Cavincrox, whose mother had been the Lady Annie Stewart, and whose father was known far and wide as the Black Earl whose cruelties were never half told.

As the clock tolled off ten silver strokes, the old Earl's eyes turned toward the door as he heard steps all too uncertain coming up the stairs and a smile of hate flashed o'er his face as he waited for his only son who was coming in answer to a wire sent two days before by the ever faithful Hopkins, telling him that his father had only a few hours more at best and that he should come home at once. So as the door slowly opened, his son and heir, standing only by being held up by Hopkins and blinking half shut eyes at his father, demanded in a thick, loud voice, "What the Hell," he meant by waiting so long. Why hadn't he had a little consideration (for his son)

"and died last night?" When he received no answer from his father he tried to walk over to the bed, but a white hand was raised and a voice low but distinct said, "Where were you last night and with whom?" He threw back his head and laughed and said, "With my wife that is to be as soon as you kick off this soil." "And whom may that be?" asked the Earl. His son came over to the bed before he answered, then with gleaming eyes and teeth clinched, he told his father, "Yoma Yaresmouth," and asked his father how he thought she would look as Lady Cavincrain, with all the jewels that his mother, the perfect woman, had worn. With a low hiss the old Earl said: "Just one word—Never!" and as the clock chimed the half hour, the old Earl passed on and the new Earl held sway. With one loud, drunken howl, he began to sing, "Long live the King."

PART II.

Twenty-four hours after the old Earl had passed on, they were carrying him to his last resting place. A soft, gentle rain was falling. Perhaps tears were mingled with the drops. One never knows.

Up at the big house the new Earl was lounging by a log fire that lent warmth and cheer to the room, while on a couch near by a woman was curled up like a big black and white cat, with an empty glass on a taboret. A dead cigarette hung droopily from carmine lips as she daintily pushed the Earl with a tiny, gold slippers foot to wake him from a drunken doze, and asked in a low, silvery voice, "Heart of my soul, when do we hear the will?"

With all the vicious love of a brute, he tried to take her in his arms and crush her; but was held at bay by one slim little hand that was so heavy with jeweled rings that it seemed the fingers must break. There was a glitter of coal black eyes, and a voice all silvery but as cold as the blast of the North said, "Wait until the will is read. It is possible the Earl, your father, did not like me. For if I'm not to be the Countess of Cavincrain, then adieu."

Slowly through the fast falling rain the ever faithful Hopkins and the old lawyer returned to the house where with the housekeeper and servants the old lawyer was to read the will; and when they came in to the firelit room with the Earl and Yoma already waiting, the servants were summoned and the last will (but not a long one) of Richard Sixteenth Earl of Cavincrain was read.

To the servants he was more than generous and to his son he left 50 pounds a year to support the title, as the land was not entailed, however if within six months after the death of Lord Richard, he married one Mary Harcourt, only daughter of the late Lord Mountbuckle of Turrain, and in the event of such a marriage he was to have the revenue of two-thirds of all the estate as long as she remained his wife and she was to receive one-third of all the estate as soon as the marriage was performed, the income from the estate to go to their heirs, if any, at his death.

As soon as the last word of the will had been read, Yoma, with a stretch like a huge cat, got up and glided over to the old lawyer and in a low voice asked if there

could possibly be any mistake, or if Eddie could possibly break the will. After the old lawyer told her "Absolutely no," she asked a maid to bring her wraps and Hopkins to ring for a cab. She then turned toward Edward Richard, Earl of Cavincrain, and with a swift and panther like glide stood before him in all her wild beauty such as her mother had had when she was a dancer in a taproom and had killed Yoma's father for refusing to make her a wife—said in a voice as cold as steel, "Adieu." But he, in a drunken stupor, only called for more drinks.

With frequent trips to town to try to see Yoma, June had almost passed before he gave a thought to his father's will or Mary Harcourt.

PART III.

*Unknown to each other like ships in the night,
The soul of two women, one black, one white.*

On this bright June morning, the 25th, to be exact, Mary Harcourt had scrambled out of bed in a great hurry to take a ride on her new horse, Black Bess, a birthday gift from her mother's youngest brother, the Rev. John Willoughby, Vicar of the Parish of Cavincrain who had never married as his love for Elisabeth Poindexter had never changed. And as Mary's mother had died when Mary was only two years old and her brother, Steven, was twelve, the father, Richard, Tenth Lord Mountbuckle, left them orphaned when Mary was fourteen years old. As the housekeeper had always been in the family and with her mother's old nurse, Jane Sawyer, Mary had reached her eighteenth birthday. Two years before her brother Steven had married the Honorable Victoria Hattenfield who was a widow eight years his senior with twin daughters seventeen years old and a pair of vixens excelled only by their mother.

Mary was singing and thinking of her horse and the morning, as she ran out to have the groom bring back Black Bess, imagine her surprise and anger as standing at the block with its head down all stripped and cut with a whip and reeking with sweat was Black Bess and sitting on a stump not far off was the "Black Vixen" (by the name of Belle Cartwright) as Mary always called her to Jane Sawyer. With her hair all down and her habit in shreds, cursing like a pirate. When Mary threw her arms around Black Bess, she rushed at Mary and lashed her as she had lashed Black Bess and only for a stable boy who promptly knocked the vixen down, would have scarred Mary for life. As Mary started to go tell Steven, Victoria came. She seeing Belle lying on the ground accused Mary of being the one and ran to tell Steven that she saw Mary strike Belle. That afternoon Steven went up to Mary's room to tell her that she had better go for a long, long visit to the Vicarage as he would not have his daughter so treated. Mary so indignant, bowed her head and with never a word, dressed and rode Black Bess over to the Vicarage of Cravencrox, to her Uncle John's, with Jane Sawyer to follow with all her belongings, there to make

her home and sing in the choir of the little church she loved so well and live such a happy life with only Uncle John, Jane Sawyer and his old housekeeper, Ann Brent.

Just three days after she had come to the Vicarage, Uncle John had a call from the Earl who was sober enough to talk plain and when he asked about Mary, Reverend John told him that she was making her home with him and some of the reasons she was there—in fact enough to let the Earl know just how he could handle Mary if she refused him. So on the next Sunday he was in the Cavencrain pew—something that he had not taken the trouble to do for twenty years. After the service he shook hands with Rev. John and asked to be introduced to Mary, walked home and carried her prayer book and found out what time she rode Black Bess and where, and had Rogers bring around a horse and would overtake her every time she went out and ride back home and make it a point to stop at the Vicarage for a glass of buttermilk and each time Jane Sawyer wished the buttermilk would poison him. Three weeks went by and one day he

asked Mary to marry him. She told him that as she did not love him she could not marry him. When he asked Uncle John he showed him the door, so things looked bad for the Earl.

One night a month later he thought of Steven and sat down and asked him for Mary's hand, told him how much Mary would gain by marrying him, what her dowry would be, but as Steven was away when the letter reached Tur-rain and the Honorable Victoria opened it with all the appearance of the right to open and answer Steven's correspondence. As she read a calm came over her face and a sparkle to her eye, and with the thought of Mary married to that rake of Hell a laugh such as it is the fate of few to hear left her lips. The angels must have wept in pity for a soul so lost. With a few strokes of a pen the Honorable Victoria wrote to say that if he really wanted to marry Mary to come over at once and she thought they could curb Mary; that was if he came before Steven who was to be absent for three days returned home.

PART IV.

*"With the sickle of time we must reap what we sow,
Either good or bad, God willed it so."*

On a hot, dusty day the middle of August, a horse covered with dust and foam stopped at the block at Tur-rain. A young man six foot tall and with a handsome face only for the sagging eyes and the purple blue of alcohol, lurched and half sprawled from the saddle, and after many attempts pulled at the knocker, which was answered by a maid, who showed him direct to the Honorable Victoria who had waited a good two hours, whose greeting was "You are a damned good two hours late." So when drinks were brought the two imps of hell hatched a plot worthy of Satan himself and after Eddie, Earl of Cavincrain, had left an I. O. U. for a thousand pounds and the Honorable Victoria had signed a contract, for those two precious knaves did not trust each other, the Earl went at once to town to see Yoma and make peace with her.

For after he should marry Mary he could see her "O, once in a long, long time, maybe." That was if they were having a new trinket she might want then he could come and bring it, if it should happen to be diamonds or pearls, or a new India shawl. However, she "would think about it and maybe, just maybe." So while he was making peace with Yoma, the Honorable Victoria carried out her part of the plan.

As Steven was to return the next day she dressed in a gown that helped to show all her beauty, and she is a very beautiful woman with a wild, bold beauty that set men's nerves all aglow, and had caused Steven who was a very quiet, peaceful man, to quarrel with some of his best and oldest friends, and at one time he had fought with Bertie Howe, Lord Barclift, a boyhood friend and chum and threatened if ever he caught him at Turrain again he would shoot him on sight, so when Steven came home a day before he was expected and Bertie was there on a special request from him (so Bertie thought) as he had been so told by Victoria, who saw with surprise Steven come up the drive and had immediately poured three glasses of wine and as she heard him cross the hall

had carried a glass to Bertie with the remark that Steven was coming, she would have the drinks ready, and coyly sat down on the arm of his chair, just as Steven pushed back the curtain and gently let fall again in place, and left the house before anyone but Victoria had seen him and when she saw him go out she knew she had won the price of success.

So that night when he returned she was surprised as anyone should be, and so things went smoothly on until the first of September, and the day she and the Earl had fixed for the final trip to be sprung. The Honorable Victoria had sent a note to Bertie saying she was in trouble and would he meet her that afternoon and if so when and at what time; that he must see her or she would kill herself and when his answer came saying he would give his life to make her happy, she must meet him at the Three Oaks at three sharp, and if she wasn't there he would come up to the Hall, Steven or no Steven. This she dropped in the path as she left the house so that Steven would find it as he had watched her like a cat watches a mouse since he came home. So as soon as she was out of

sight he pounced down on the note and when he had read it he ran back to the house and ran out again with a revolver clutched tightly in his hand and ran straight for the Three Oaks. As he came in sight of it he saw Bertie and Victoria sitting on a fallen tree. So he stepped behind a tree to fire and just as he pulled the trigger a hand gripped his arm and threw the gun down and a voice hissed "Murderer" and he was looking in the face of the Earl of Cavencrain who pushed him with such force that he fell to the ground and then was kicked for falling while the Earl laughed and said: "And I had come to ask for the hand of your sister Mary in marriage. Gad, I don't think I will ask for it now. Just don't like havin' a murderer for a brother-in-law. Guess I had better go tell Lord Barclift and the Honorable Victoria and see what they say."

"O, for God's sake, man, don't do that. Give me a chance. Come up to the house. Let's talk it over."

"No, there is nothing to talk. I love your sister Mary but I'll be d—— if I want a wife who has a brother so handy with a gun. I get drunk and I'm proud of it but a murderer is not my line." And all the time as they were talking the Earl was slowly walking back to the Hall, so in to it and over to a decanter and poured a

big, stiff drink for each and sat down and talked. At the end of two hours they came to an agreement. That was he, the Earl, was never to let Victoria know if Steven made Mary marry him before the 17th of October.

That night Steven rode over to the Vicarage to tell Mary and insist that she marry the Earl of Cavencrain and when Mary walked out of the house with head held high and heels clinking on the bricks in the walk, Steven followed her and told her all, and asked if her love was so poor for him that she would rather see him in a dungeon than to marry a fine man with an old name. "All right, if she could go to church and pray, knowing she had sent her only brother to rot in a rathole where the worms and beetles would keep him company. And if that was all the gratitude she had in her after all the sacrifices he had made for her."

And Mary, what words could tell her fear and loathing of the Earl, Her love for her brother and last, but above all the memory of her father. How proud he had always been of Steven. With what pride he had always said that thank the Good Lord, God had given him such

a good son, and could she ever face that father in the hereafter if she would ever allow the slightest stain on the family name. How clearly she could hear her father saying, "Death or any sacrifice rather than disgrace," and so with a light on her face like the martyrs of old "so be it."

PART V.

*When Satan strives to possess a soul,
God sends to protect it a lamb from his fold.*

It was a cold, drizzly rain that had started in the night that greeted Mary as she looked out the window and a slow smile curved her lip as she turned back to be dressed, and Jane Sawyer said "If this was only your funeral instead of your wedding, Miss, you would be blest, for blest is the corpse that the rain falls on; but the bride must have sunshine to be happy." And as if the Lord heard and wanted Mary to know, the sun came out in all its glory and Mary with a look of wonderment, shook Jane by the shoulder and said "Are you sure, cross your heart, and say so," and Jane looked out and fell on her knees and with hands uplifted, thanked God in such a firm belief that Mary sank down beside her and with arms around each other, asked God's blessing and help. A knock on the door and when Jane opened it, Ann Brent almost fell into the room trying to hold a box of flowers as big as she was from the Earl. As 9 o'clock struck the bell on the chapel pealed out the glad news that it was

Mary's wedding day. That it was Mary's wedding day—wedding day—until everything seemed to say, wedding day, and Mary all in white, the dress that her mother had worn, veil and all, came slowly up the aisle, was met at the chancel by the Earl of Cravencrain who was immaculately dressed and for once was sober and as she looked in his face and met his eyes, she knew that she had always pitied him, he was so white and his eyes were so wild and his hands all tremble, that when he took the ring to hand to her he dropped it and it rolled down the chancel steps out of sight, lost. And then he took a ring off his finger, that had been his mother's and gave it to her with the words, "Just like everything about me Mary, just a bit of second-hand stuff," and the Vicar's voice droned out the words repeated by him, "With this ring, thee I wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." And then the Vicar's "Let us pray." Soon they were out in the sunshine and the raindrops glistened in the sun.

Slowly the car crept up to the big hall and at the door all the servants were drawn up in two rows to welcome

their new mistress and as he left the car with a "Wait Simpson" he walked by his servants holding Mary by the hand and through the hall to the foot of the great staircase, and with a goodbye, hurried back to the car and was off, somewhere—only he knew—and Mary with the relief of his going but with just indignation that he would dare offer her such an insult, burst into tears.

The old housekeeper came and put an arm around her with a "Come, Miss" led her up to her room where a maid was waiting her and soon had her all comfy in a big chair by the fire and for many days she never left her room hoping yet fearing he would come home. And he, the Seventeenth Earl of Cavencrain, what was he doing. Just madly trying to see Yoma who had promised to see him or go out with him only to have two or three others present and would tantalize him with her beauty and her half naked loveliness, accepting all the costly gifts and with a half promise to see him again, and with a coquettish smile, asked for her Ladyship, as to her health, and to be remembered to her, by him. And all the time offering him something to drink and keeping him half crazed with the hope of having her and down to the blackest

depth of despair that he would not ever see her again. And after hours of hellish torture would doze off to sleep to be wakened by a phone call from her telling how she missed him and just must call him up so she could hear his voice and then to tell how "That fellow from New York, that old steel duck, had made" her promise she would marry him, so she was leaving for Paris right now. Only to ring up two or three hours later to say that she was all his own and then he would be so drunk from the Black devils of her first call that her second only was heard through a rum soaked brain and a drunken delirious souse was the result, to last for days, so it was on one of these and if it could be worse than the others, that he took a late train home to Mary.

Arriving there just at dusk, a cold rain was falling. Mary had just come from vespers and with one foot on the stairs turned, as the great hall door opened and he lurched and stumbled in and she stood rooted to the spot with all the life frozen out of her, with fear, and as he came nearer, weaving from side to side and his long arms hanging down and his fingers clutching and twisting in such a mad bold way, she shrank back from him

and clutched the bosom of her gown and the long cape she had been wearing slipped to the floor. With one hand she held to the post of the staircase and he, with a look of hell on his face, took her arm in a vise of steel and jerked her to him and took her in his arms and tried to kiss her and when the neck of her plain grey dress came open and she tried to hold it closed with her hand, he held both her hands in one of his and with the other tore her dress from neck to hem and never stopped until he had torn most of her clothes off her, and with both hands she was trying to hold the tatters and shreds of her clothes on her, he turned and staggered to the fireplace and ordered Hopkins who had witnessed all her humiliation to bring whiskey at once, and Hopkins after walking backward to the stair picked up Mary's cape and handed it to her and still with his face turned went to obey his master, and she tried as best she could to tie the rags around her and fastened her cape and went out in the dark and rain to the little church and after lighting a candle set it on the altar of God and knelt in prayer.

PART VI.

*"So the drunk, sodden brain, gave shapes to the
mind,
Of visions and dreams all of its kind."*

And as Hopkins set down the decanter he said :

"Bring six or ten bottles, you damned grinning hyena and clear out of it. I won't have anyone watching me, you understand, and don't come back until I ring or I will lash you with that crop up there a hundred lashes. Do you hear, you damned imp of Hell, damned imp of Hell, imp of H-e-l-l," with that he drained four or five big drinks and slumped down in a heap, in a drunken doze to rouse up when a clapp of thunder louder than those before caused by a bolt of lightning that seemed to split the heaven in twain with hands that trembled and shook would pour yet another drink, and as the wind went howling through the giant oaks to sob and whine and moan as each blast of wind would die down only to screech again like the lost souls in hell, he would mumble and try to laugh as he slumped down deeper in his chair until the last bottle but one was empty and that one he

turned over, so the dark red wine slowly trickled off the table and ran along the floor until it was stopped in its course by one of his feet where it formed in a little pool. It would seem Satan must have been close to will it so. The doze turned into a deep troubled sleep to dream.

He chased Mary upstairs and in her room and after tearing most of her clothes off, crushed her in such a bearlike hug that she screamed and then he sank his teeth in her soft white arms and throat and then bit her till she was all bruised and scarred.

So when August came with all its heat, a little girl came to Mary and when she saw it she said:

"She shall be Elisabeth for your mother."

And he said:

"Well, I hope she grows up to be half so good as mother was."

As the days went and months became a year he had stopped drinking and was seen in the little church

every Sunday and when Baby Elisabeth was three and a half he was made Senior Warden and had become a very just and good man. And Mary was happy with her little daughter and took great pride in teaching her all the nice, good little things a little girl should know. So when she was four the Earl gave her a little pony named Spot and the head groom was to teach her to ride. And along in the fall one day something happened to Spot and Baby Elisabeth had to wait in the carriage room a short time, so she walked through it to the harness room where the stable boys were cleaning harness and smoking cigarettes and as a big boy laid his cigarette down for a minute, Elisabeth picked it up and put it in her mouth and pushed her hat on the back of her head and cried, "Look at me," as she strutted back and forth, and of course the boys laughed just as her nurse came in with the head groom, who immediately threw it away and told the boys that if they so much as whispered about the incident she would have them thrashed good and the boys knew the head groom and never said a word.

One day as Mary came in to the room Elisabeth was up on a chair helping herself to a drink of wine from the

decanter and Mary took her down, slapped her hands, the child in a very fury grabbed her mother's dress and tore the lace flounce nearly off and when she started to run her little legs were so tipsy that she could hardly walk, and with a little laugh that turned to a little gurgle, as her father opened the door and when he saw her and realized that she was drunk, he rang for Hopkins and ordered every drop of liquor of every shape and kind to be taken and kept away from the house forever.

And Mary with her arms around her baby was down on her knees asking God to never let it happen again, while the Earl was stretched on a couch and the sobs that shook him were a credit to his manhood, as he shed tears of a broken heart.

A month or so went by, and one day Jane Sawyer went into one of the maid's rooms and there was Elisabeth with one of the guest's lipstick and rouge pack with her face all red and her little frock off and holding her little slip up to her waist was saying, "I am a red hot mama. You can tell it by my shape." So when Jane told Mary she and the Earl decided that Jane was to be Elisabeth's nurse

until she would be old enough to be put in a strict school. But poor Jane would go for a walk and sit down under a tree and would fall asleep and Elisabeth after taking Jane close to the stable so she could watch Jane if she should wake, she would run to the harness room and with the stable boys and the lackeys smoke and drink and learn to do bar room dances and could swear like a pirate at the age of six but mind you neither the Earl, her mother nor Jane knew anything about it.

And the spring Elisabeth was six a little brother came to the Hall to live, and the Earl said :

"Well, as one of the kiddies is Elisabeth, the other should be Richard Mongrove, II."

And Elisabeth thought he was fine until he was three or four weeks old and one day the nurse left them together for a few minutes, when she returned Elisabeth had a lighted cigarette in his mouth and he was almost strangled to death by the smoke and as the nurse was too surprised to move, Elisabeth put the cigarette in her mouth and puffed away like mad, and after a moment said,

"You are as big a damn fool as Sawyer, I guess I tell the stork to take you back. Mom and Dad are all the soft spots I can very well stand."

So the years went by with Mary and the Earl never knowing what would happen next until Elisabeth was ten and Dickie four, they heard of a very strict school and very respectable, kept by the Miss Bloomfields who were very exclusive, and a very high tuition was charged. So Elisabeth was sent there to come home twice a year—but Man proposes and Fate in the shape of Yoma Yares-mouth who was one of Satan's own, went to the Miss Bloomfields with a letter purporting to be from the Countess of Cavencrain, asking that their daughter the Lady Elisabeth, be allowed to spend a fortnight at her Cousin's, Lady Beatrix Cavencrain. As she thought best to let Lady Bettie have an outing once in a while and not to let the Earl know as men were such strict creatures with their women folk, so Bettie took her first trip knowing her father or mother did not know a thing about it. And O, what a time she had, with public dances, women, men and wine. And you may know Yoma had never forgiven the Earl for his reform, and was bound that

Bettie should be more than she (Yoma) had ever been in the underworld. So everything went as Yoma wished till Lady Bettie was eighteen and then the crash came.

One night the Earl, who was a member of a Board of Critics to pass on all shows, had heard of a place, of a girl of divine shape and strands of pearls, with a mask who was to dance and that her dance made "The Dance of the Seven Veils" merely a Bible story. So he went in all his wrath to see it. As he sat in the box next the stage, the dancer danced up right in front of him, her mask ribbon snapped, and he was looking in the face of his own daughter. With a hoarse hiss he leaped over the box rail and threw his top coat around her and his hat crushed down over her head, picked her up and before anyone knew what it was all about, was out in the street, had hailed a cab and was whisked home. He carried her into the room where all the guns and whips were kept and threw her down. He then seized a riding crop and lashed her until her screams awoke her mother who came down in her gown with only a dressing gown around her and when she opened the door and saw her husband crouching over something on the floor that was one mass

of blood, and the Earl seeing Mary raised his arm to give yet another blow, Mary threw herself on the thing to save it further torture and he struck with all his might on the one of the two beings that were more than life itself to him, then he threw the crop across the room and picked Mary up and with all the love he had for her in his voice, asked her why she made him do it. But as Mary looked into the upturned face so full of fear and pain, she slowly pushed his arms away and kneeling down gathered the poor, bruised, bleeding body in her loving arms and with that face and eyes of hate and suffering pressed close against her loving breast she said in a voice so full of loving kindness.

"Mother's baby." And then. "Monster, how dare you so treat a child of mine."

He answered, "Never again shall she call herself by my name and this instant she shall be thrown from these doors."

Mary with the haughty grace of a duchess, said "Come mother's baby, with mother."

The Earl thundered, "No, she goes out and you to bed."

Mary, with one long look from eyes of steel, put her dressing gown around Bettie and with her arm around her walked out of the room and out of the house and out in the world—a homeless, penniless woman with only God's protection and love. And he, when he heard the great door close with a bang sat down on a chair with his head in his hands and so sat until the clock chimed two. Then the Earl went out and came back and went up to Mary's room, taking a hat she had worn that evening, together with her dress, shoes and all the clothes she was wearing that evening when she went over to the Vicarage and after he had burned all but the hat in the big fireplace, he went out to the boat house and took a boat and towed another after him, rowed to the middle of the lake then tipped the other boat bottom up. He carefully placed Mary's hat after he had kissed it gently on the water rowed back and went in the house, undressed and went to bed. The next morning one of the men missed the boat and when he saw it upside down and Mary's hat floating along by the side of it, he came to

let the Earl know what he had found. When Mary could not be found and everything but the dress her maid said she had worn to the vicarage was found, everyone thought she was drowned so when Dickie came down to breakfast, his father told him that his mother was dead and that his sister had run away from school to dance and no one knew where she had gone; but that Scotland Yard would surely find her. So Richard became the very soul of his father, with his frank, earnest face, with a shade of sadness for the mother he had worshiped and the uncertainty of his sister's whereabouts, he changed from a laughter loving boy to a very sober young man. A boy that was the soul of honor, whose word was ever the truth and whose memory of his mother had ever been to make his love for her more enduring, made him ever eager to help others; and to make any sacrifice for anyone's happiness and his father to him was the soul of honor, who had never done a mean act or a cruel one to anyone or thing. So it was no wonder that the Earl idolized him and when he was 18 and went to college, his father went with him and put up in quarters so he could see Richard every day.

So one vacation time the boys of his class went "slumming" and the Earl went along. After an hour or so they were down to where honest but very poor people lived, when Dickie saw a little girl crying. He asked her what was wrong, she said she had hurt her foot and couldn't he carry her home.

So he picked the child up and with the question "Where to," she said.

"Down the street to the green house, upstairs. Bettie lives downstairs. Do you love Bettie? Everyone loves Bettie and her mother is the most beautiful lady you ever saw. Granny says she is an angel only angels don't have to scrub for a living; and Granny says when Bettie dies—and she's going to soon—then Mother Mary won't have to work so hard. Here is the place. You will get to see Bettie if you carry me upstairs."

"It's just me, Bettie, don't be scared."

"O, here is mother Mary. Ouch! What did you drop me for."

And as little Ann looked up from the floor where Dickie had let her fall, she saw Mother Mary with a hand on her heart and heard her say, "Dickie, my little baby boy Dickie," and the man that had dropped Ann was rubbing his hand across his eyes at last he said: "Are you my dead mother," and she said, "Your mother, Dickie, but not dead," and he put out a hand and touched hers and when he felt her hand was warm, but O, so rough and hard and worn, he heard a voice that could not talk but a word or two at a time for the coughing say.

"Dickie, it was all a lie. Mother left with me. He had beat me until I was black and blue and made me a cripple for life and that angel that you and I call Mother, has watched and scrubbed to keep us from starving while he had all the money—kept mother's and mine—and knew we were starving, as she wrote and told him and asked for my share but he never sent it." And all the time Mary was softly crying in Dickie's arms and he was kissing her hair and patting her back—Bettie took a more violent coughing spell than ever and they both ran over to the couch.

The effort had been too much for Bettie and as Dickie held her in his arms her soul went back to its Maker. After he had laid her down and had his long suffering mother in his arms he heard his father saying to someone.

"Did you say he went in here?" And then as he rose to his feet with an arm clasping his mother, his father came in with "Hello, Dickie, what is this?"

And when his father received no answer from his son, the Earl put a trembling hand on his arm, only to have it removed by Richard, and saw a pair of eyes with a look of hate, as Richard said:

"Sir, I know you for what you are. Not the respectable, honest, truthful gentleman I have always thought you; but a hard, unrelenting, inhuman monster, a liar, a cheat and a thief who has starved his wife and daughter, not from necessity but from mean, damnable, oppressive power, just because you had the power, and lied to me, not only lived a lie, but went to church and prayed to God always with a lie on your lips. My sister you not only beat, as none but Satan could, but deprived her of

her rightful inheritance that was bought and paid for by our mother and the one and everlasting shame that is mine is that you are my father, and my sister, God bless her, is forever out of your reach. Will you please, have the kindness and decency to go."

PART VII

*"So Satan, stood close, all unaware, watched
his victim—asleep in the chair,
Of the pure, young wife who prayed the night
most through,
At the foot of God's altar, her strength to renew,
Or a good, sweet mother in Heaven above, ask-
ing God to save
The soul of her son she loved."*

Then a crash as the table on which the six empty bottles were, crashed to the floor and with a leap, Edward Richard, Earl of Cavencrain, was on his feet with a wild look around and as his eyes sought the decanter across the room, he reeled over and taking it up held it high above his head and as he looked in the eyes of a picture over the fireplace, he made his vow :

“Mother in Heaven, hear me. If you have any pity or love for me, help me keep my vow. Never while life lasts will liquor of any kind pass my lips. So help me, God.” And with a well aimed blow he dashed it in the face of his grandfather’s picture and said “Amen.”

Then he thought of Mary as he had left her standing by the foot of the stair trying to hold her poor little grey dress together and the look of a frightened child on her face. With the thought, he rushed out as fast as his drunken legs would take him, up stairs, but no Mary and as he stumbled down the stair he saw Hopkins who said when he asked, "I think she is at the Chapel, sir." The Earl fairly pulled the door off its hinges in his hurry to find her. Out in the pouring rain he ran with hair pushed off his forehead and collar and tie gone, with the studs all out and his shirt half torn off the neckband, as he had torn it as he awakened from his dream of Hell. So he half ran, half stumbled down through the lane of towering oak trees to the Chapel door as it was swinging back and forth by the wind. He walked in and there on the altar was a candle almost burned low. Mary with her arms raised and her hands clasped at the foot of the cross. Slowly he walked to her side and knelt down and put a hand over Mary's and sobbed. "Forgive me, God, for all I have done." A voice came down through the ages so low but O, so clear and full of forgiveness—

"Come unto Me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you."

AUTHOR'S NOTE

*I am sending this book out through all
the world, knowing beyond all doubt that
whosoever reads it will glean a tiny gold
thread to bind their souls closer to God.*

—THE AUTHOR.



